



PLAIN TRACTS
FOR CRITICAL TIMES;
ON THE IMPORTANT SUBJECTS OF
BAPTISM AND REGENERATION,
&c.

WITH AN ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
OXFORD TRACTS,
&c. &c.

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM,
AND INTERPRETATION OF JOHN III. 5.
(*PROFESSOR PUSEY.*)

BY A UNION OF CLERGYMEN.

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REGENERATION, &c.

THE object of this Tract will be to examine the views of Professor *Pusey*, on baptismal regeneration, which appeared originally in "Tracts for the Times," but are now published in one volume, to which the references will be here made. We shall first discuss the question respecting the *superiority* claimed by the Professor for baptism, beyond circumcision,—and secondly, enter into a minute examination of the *text*, "water and the Spirit;" John iii. 5, on which he mainly builds his system. Or in other words, we shall first inquire into the original establishment of baptism; and secondly, into its spiritual import, as implied in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus.

SECTION I.

The superiority claimed for Baptism above Circumcision.

The doctrine of "Baptismal Regeneration," the Professor undertakes to demonstrate, both from scripture and the early fathers. The scripture, being our only infallible guide, must be, if not wholly, yet chiefly regarded on this subject. The fathers we have already seen, are no infallible guides here. Before we can become converts to his sentiments, however, we must be allowed to expect a clear development of some important points of scripture, which he has not yet explained.

First, he speaks of baptismal regeneration, as being almost all-important. He says, that "Regeneration—

spiritual birth—is in scripture connected with baptism,”—that “baptism is the instrument of the new birth, in a way that no other cause but God himself is,”—that “baptism is not a mere initiatory rite, but an appointed means for *conveying* the Holy Spirit,”—that “the Holy Spirit is there *first* pledged, and *imparted* to us,”—that “in baptism, all their old sins *had been* forgiven, and they themselves re-born from the dead, and *been* made partakers of the life of CHRIST, quickened with him,”—that “Baptism is a sacrament; and that if so, it must convey the blessings annexed to it,” when not obstructed,—that “sacraments are not bare signs, but *convey that also which they signify*,”—that “the benefits of Holy Baptism are, by virtue of the sacrament itself, and of the Divine institution imparted,”—and that “Zuingli’s notions on the meaning of a sacrament, were derived originally, not from scripture, but from classical usage.” Pages 12, 13. 37. 83, 84. 92.

Secondly, The Professor considers that “the initiatory sacrament of the *New Testament*,” rises essentially above the initiatory rite of the *Old*,—that “the comparison of baptism” with “circumcision,” tends “to bring down baptism, from a sacrament of Christ to the character of the signs of the older dispensation,”—and that “St. Paul speaks of circumcision as a sign and seal only.” Pages 131, 139. St. Paul’s instruction, we shall fully examine in a future number.

In these two classes of extracts, the following statements are made. We are told—1. That Christian baptism *conveys* the Holy Spirit.—2. That sacraments ordained by Christ, convey what they signify, and that baptism does this by virtue of the *Divine institution*.—3. But that old Testament rites were only signs or seals. It is manifest that the above *three* points, are all involved in the notion entertained of baptismal regeneration. — Besides, these notions of baptismal regeneration, are not to be called in question from any lack of evidence, or from defect of morality in persons who have been baptised. Bishop Bethell, and Mr. Dodsworth, both join Dr. Pusey, in esteeming them “subjects of faith,” (p. 161,) as truly as the divinity of Christ is:—Opposition to them is called “unbelief.” (p. 144.) And we are solemnly invited to attend to the “words of Christ.” In his preface, he says,

“I wish to recall men to their Saviour’s feet, and to induce them to think, apart from modern systems, what his words, teachably considered, lead to—what the words of the Holy Scripture must mean, in his mouth who spake them.” p. 3, 4.

It is certainly a fair proposition, that we should seek our Saviour’s INSTITUTIONS in his *own word*. We can however conceive of only *two* ways in which *baptism* could become an ordinance of *His appointment*, and the blessings annexed to it become properly known;—1. If Christ originally, in the *first instance*, ordained and *instituted it*;—or, 2. If He appointed its *adoption* from any existing institution;—and, If when he *instituted* it, he *specified* its privileges; or, if when he *adopted* it, he particularly explained what he omitted, or what he added. Thus he would make it expressly his own sacrament, with all its altered and additional privileges, provided any change was made; but if *not*, then we must receive it as it stood in its *original shape*.

We acknowledge, indeed, that if we find our Lord or his disciples by his order, *practising* a rite, and directing it to be perpetuated in his church, that would satisfy us respecting its fitness, and our obligation. But a rite only, thus sanctioned, would leave the Professor’s system without a shadow of evidence; because his system assumes, that baptism is Christ’s *own institution*; and, moreover, that it greatly *exceeds* in privileges and effect, the rites that preceded it: Hence we are compelled to seek for either an original and primary ordinance, *instituted* by Christ himself, independent of all Old Testament customs;—or else, an ordinance *adopted* from previous rites, with additional privileges annexed to it by Christ himself.

But observe, when we enquire after the ORIGINAL INSTITUTION, or the *original* ADOPTION of Christ’s baptism, we are not to be beguiled by “Fathers, creeds, and expositions.” For be it remembered, that we are not *now* asking for the meaning and explanation of baptism, but for its *origin* and *original* establishment by our Saviour. For as the Professor insists so much on “*Christ’s* ordinances, Christ’s institution,” and on the vast superiority of Christ’s sacrament above that of the Old Testament, we must learn in what *documentary* instruction of the *New Testament*, such a sacrament, so supremely

endowed, *is found*. We must *demand*, as every prudent man, even in temporal affairs, would do; the *original document* respecting the institution, or the real testamentary grant, by which our regeneration in baptism, and our eternal inheritance are *specifically conveyed*. It is true we are referred by the Professor to John iii. 5, where our Lord speaks of "water and the Spirit." But this certainly is not the *institution* of baptism.

We are enquiring for our Lord's INSTITUTION of the ordinance. He did not institute it on this occasion. For it is not so much as mentioned in plain language. If it be said that our Saviour *alluded*, by anticipation, to an ordinance *hereafter* to be appointed; we ask again, when was that appointment made, and what were the *words* of its institution? Our Lord, we know, after his resurrection, commanded his disciples to "go and teach all nations, and baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This was certainly investing the apostles with authority to baptise, and instructing them in the very language in which it was to be performed. But this is not an original record of the institution; on the contrary, it clearly implies that *baptism* already existed.

Suppose, then, we trace the matter back through the various stages of our Lord's ministry, till we come to the early part of it, recorded in the *fourth* chapter of St. John. There we read, that "Jesus made and baptised more disciples than John," (though Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples). Here, however, we have again only the ministration of baptism, and not its institution. In John iii. 22, (earlier still,) we are told that "Jesus tarried with his disciples, and baptised." And this, perhaps, is the first intimation in the Gospel, that he ever did so. But even here, there is no original *appointment*, nor any reference made to it.—Hence, then, it appears that *baptism did not originate* with our Lord, nor did he appoint it, independently of what had been formerly practised, under the ancient dispensation, nor did he disregard former rites as *unsuitable* to his purpose. But further,

It seems evident, that had nothing been said or known respecting baptism, *before* what is said by our Saviour respecting it, that no certain idea of it could be collected.

The incidental mention of the word “water,” in John iii. 5, could not possibly convey any correct notion of *baptism*, had it been wholly unknown before;—1. Because baptism is not mentioned in this text, nor are the words “born of water,” explained. And as water was used by the Jews in numerous external washings, and applied also in the Old Testament to designate spiritual blessings, and is necessary to our existence as a support of life,—it would seem impossible, unless more were known, that Nicodemus, or any one else, could understand what being “born of water” could mean.—2. Because when our Saviour ordained the *continuance* of *baptism* in his church, he did not say so much as one word about “water.” Matt. xxviii. 19.—Mark xvi. 16. As in John iii. 5, he never mentions *baptism*, so in his last directions, he does not mention “water.”

It appears, therefore, quite clear, that had not baptism been practically *known* to the disciples or to the Jews *before*, the few words spoken by our Saviour, in the Gospels, could not have afforded them any clear and undoubted exposition of its nature. But baptism was a thing quite familiar to the Jews: and Nicodemus, therefore, would readily understand what meaning the words, “born of water,” were intended to convey.

We find, indeed, in the Old Testament, a Divine institution respecting “the water of separation,” Num. xix. 2. 17, to which St. Paul alludes in Heb. ix. 13. It was necessary that *this water* should be sprinkled on every “unclean” person, whether Jew or Gentile, before he could be received into the *congregation*. Hence we must infer, that no Gentile convert could be admitted into the Jewish church without being baptised or sprinkled with this “water of separation.” This baptism, and other washings connected with it, in addition to circumcision, were necessary before any *Gentile proselyte* could gain admission into the Jewish Church. This is proved by historic facts.

The passage alluded to above, in the book of Numbers, was probably what our Saviour referred to in his conversation with Nicodemus. And as our Saviour speaks of “water,” as necessary in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, we may reasonably conclude, that he intended Nicodemus to understand that it must, in some shape, be

used for that purpose. In what shape we shall hereafter examine. But as he said nothing about a *new institution*, Nicodemus must have concluded (and so must we), that our Lord intended to *adopt* this part of the Old Testament rites, as an introductory ordinance into his own kingdom.

Therefore, under the *ADOPTION* of baptism, it becomes of essential importance to inquire what *alteration* our Lord made respecting the use of water, when he adopted it as an ordinance in his kingdom. It is well known that the Jews made use of water in various kinds of washings : but it is not probable that our Saviour would adopt any ceremony that was not either of a Divine original, or of essentially the same character, and used for the same intention. The only *analogous* rite, which seems to have been of sufficient importance to warrant the conclusion, that our Lord transferred it from the Jewish church into his own, was the introduction of *proselytes* into that church by baptism.

But it will be necessary to the very *existence* of the Professor's system, who ascribes so much superiority to baptism, to *show what alterations*, if any, our Lord made in baptism, and what *additional* privileges he "annexed" to it when he adopted it as his own ordinance. But here again there is an entire want of evidence. As we find no record whatever of any *primary* appointment by our Saviour, or of his *original adoption* of baptism, so we have no account whatever of any *alterations* made, or of any enlarged *privileges* appended to it. And the Professor has given us no reference to Scripture in confirmation of his statements, that the benefits imparted (including regeneration and remission of sins), were imparted by virtue of our Saviour's *institution*, or of "his words of blessing," and that they are *not* to be ascribed to "the counsel of God giving effect to the outward ordinance, when and to whom he will."—pp. 145, 146. We find, that baptism was practised by our Lord's disciples, John iii. 22 ; but there is *nothing* said about its original *adoption*, nor about the time, manner, and place when it was adopted. And yet, according to the Professor, the blessings imparted come by *virtue of its institution* ! by which, of course, he must mean that some *especial promises* were made *when* it was instituted. But, as we hear nothing of the institution itself, how can we know what *blessings*

were promised to the institution? How the Professor came to write about our Lord's words of "*institution*," and "*words of blessing*," when none such are to be found, we cannot conjecture, unless it has been that he has read them very frequently in the writings of the fathers, creeds, and offices, and has *fancied* them to be the words of Christ, and not of man.

What is now, then, we would seriously inquire, become of the Professor's declamation about baptism being the *appointed* means for conveying "the Holy Spirit," since we have no account whatever of its appointment,—and about a sacrament conveying the "blessings annexed to it," when we have no record of any "blessings" being so annexed,—and about "spiritual benefits being imparted," such as "regeneration, pardon of sin, and salvation," by virtue of the Divine institution," when there has been, in truth, no new Divine *institution*, but the *adoption* only of a rite previously existing? It is strange to find a learned Professor thus declaiming on *nonentities*. But we may ask further, what becomes of the infinite *superiority* of the *New* above the Old Testament sacraments, which our author asserts is derived to them by "virtue of the Divine institution!" and on what authority Old Testament rites are to be so degraded as to be considered only signs, and no sacraments! For, let us here repeat—1. That our Saviour did *not* originally *institute* baptism; and, 2. That he left us no information how or when he first introduced and *adopted* it. And we may add, that when he alludes, by the single word "water," to former rites, he does not make one syllable of *comparison* between the *Old* and the *New*, nor say one word about the singular and almost miraculous *efficacy* of his own sacrament above the ancient. The very idea of *superiority* therefore, is a mere assumption; it is what is wholly unproved, and incapable of proof: it is perfectly gratuitous.

It therefore necessarily follows that the use of the word "water," in this conversation on baptism, which we may fairly suppose it implied, cannot, by any ingenuity, be made to mean any thing more or less than the water or baptism to which it alluded, and from which it wholly derives both its own existence and its own meaning.

Should it be said that the "very same words" in Christ's mouth have a "higher meaning" than when used

under the old dispensation. This, under some circumstances, might possibly be true: but here it is all a delusion. The same words must always bear the same meaning, unless the context or further explanations show the contrary. But here we have neither. When, therefore, our author asserts, that "water," that is baptism, does in this very place mean a "conveying of pardon of sin, of regeneration, and of a title to heaven," he asserts not only what our Lord has not asserted, but also what is wholly *inconsistent* with the nature of the rite to which the allusion is made; for *that rite* did not convey any such privileges, or any just title to eternal life, even according to his own admissions, for he views Old Testament rites as "only signs and seals," not sacraments. Was there ever an assertion made so destitute of proof?

This allusion of our Saviour to "water" was quite sufficient, on the ground that he intended to adopt the use of a former rite, according to its general and well-known signification; but by no means sufficient, if it was his purpose to add and annex to it such extraordinary privileges as are claimed for it by our author. To ground a title to so great benefits on such an expression, bearing such an allusion, exceeds all the absurdities that ever have been maintained. Did ever a person claim an *earthly inheritance* on any such title? According to this strange system, our *Saviour* in his LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT, left a right to everlasting life to none but to those who should be "born of water;" and yet he did not explain the use or necessity of "water" but by *this* allusion! nor did he even so much as say what being "born of water" meant. He is supposed by "water" to have alluded to a *former* will and testament, though he has not said so: neither has he stated or recited one word of its character or provisions, save being "born of water;" nor said one word about any *additions*, alterations, or improvements, which he intended this last Will and Testament should devise. But still we are told, that all the rights of the former Will and Testament are (by this single word "water," though wholly unexplained either before or after), yea, and a title to a *vast deal more* in the last than in the *former*, conveyed and secured; though *not one single word* is said of all these superior privileges and enjoyments in the very Will which *alone conveys this*

title!! A claim of title to an estate in any court of law or equity, similar to this of baptismal regeneration and of salvation, as asserted by our learned Professor, would certainly be ridiculed and laughed to scorn by any man of common understanding and reason; nay, it seems doubtful, whether such a claimant would escape prosecution for an attempt at forgery! Will the Professor cry out, “rationalism,” “profane unbelief?” We cannot help it. If we are directed to build for *heaven* on a foundation on which no man in his right mind would build a house to dwell in, we must be excused for disregarding an opprobrious name, when the eternal safety of souls is thus endangered.

We must now conclude this part of our subject. Our author seems to make much more of the “*institution* of baptism” than of that of any other rite or sacrament. But this error is most extraordinary. All analogy is precisely, fully, and forcibly against him; for, *first*, in the Old Testament, the passover, circumcision, divers washings, and especially the “water of separation,” which typified the sprinkling of Christ’s blood, were all distinctly originated, specified, and appointed, in a very peculiar manner; and, *secondly*, in the New Testament, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was *instituted* at the celebration of the Passover, the analogous rite of the Old Testament, which typified the death of Christ before it took place. The Lord’s Supper represents his death after that event. The change in this case was, indeed, considerable. But the whole is explained. The elements, their design, their end, are all particularised and minutely set forth, so that no man of common understanding, free from the delusions of prejudice, could confound or misunderstand them. But when *baptism* is inquired into, we find—

No original institution.

No notice of Christ’s adoption of it;

And when we trace it to a supposed origin, we perceive that it is *identified* with what was practised before under the *old* dispensation. And when Christ intimated that he would continue it in his kingdom, there is nothing said about its *efficacy*, but only about its necessity in order to “enter into the kingdom of God.” In what respects necessary, will be explained ere long. *This* was nothing *new*. A Gentile could not enter into the Jewish church,

without being baptised, or “born of water.” Nor can any enter into the Christian church without it.

There are especially two inferences that may be legitimately drawn from the discussion:—

First, That if a literal construction respecting the sacraments is to be insisted on, *transubstantiation*, notwithstanding its absurdity, would much more naturally follow from Christ’s words,—“This is my body,”—than “spiritual regeneration” would from Christ’s words,—“born of water.”

Secondly, That the unrevealed origin and silent introduction of baptism, without or before its formal appointment, seems to have been purposely intended;—1. To prevent the error of viewing regeneration as annexed to baptism;—2. To introduce, as it were, silently and quietly the blessings of the covenant of Abraham into the Christian dispensation, and consequently, to sanction the propriety of infant baptism. The sacrament of baptism, emanating as it apparently does from the usages of the Old Testament, and silently adopted into the New, is perfectly satisfactory, and forms a union with the covenant made with Abraham, more visibly evident than a rite entirely new would have done. But some of our modern writers, in their zeal for its supposed superior dignity, are running a fearful risk of separating altogether the two dispensations, and are thereby endangering our firmest ground for infant baptism. For baptism itself is nowhere *originated* in the New Testament, much less infant baptism. But if the covenant under the Old Testament was practically introduced into the New, there was no need of any expressed introduction of infant baptism, as it would naturally follow from the covenant of Abraham, the spiritual character of which was in no sort diminished by the change in the introductory rites, or rather, by retaining one part—the washing or baptising, and leaving out the other—the circumcision. For, as Mr. Falloon has judiciously argued, had our Saviour directed his disciples to go and teach all nations, “circumcising them,” &c., could any reasonable man have inferred from such direction, that “infants” were intended to be excluded? Certainly not. Then there is not the least pretension, on which we can rationally found the exception of baptism to infants. And 3. To teach us that there is a

superior condition of *privileges* under the Gospel, independent of any fancied superiority in the rites, the introductory rite itself being essentially the same as was practised before, and therefore not at all necessarily more *efficacious* in itself or in its operations.

SECTION II.

Examination of John iii. 5, &c.

Having already examined our author's scriptural evidence respecting the *superior* influence of baptism, and found it wanting, we shall now inquire more particularly into the genuine meaning of the text on which he builds his theory, namely, "born of water and of the Spirit." The words, of course, are to be taken in connexion with the *whole* interview, which our Saviour had with Nicodemus: they must not be drawn away from their context, and made to receive any sense we or any others may please to force upon them. We ought in this, as well as in every other consideration of Scripture, to give an interpretation—

The most literal,

The most consistent with the context,

The most accordant with the analogy of faith.

We shall first endeavour to give such an exposition; and then shew, that it is accordant, and that no other is accordant with Scripture, with itself, and with the practice and observance of the church of Christ, from its foundation to the present time.

First, The exposition.

Two or three things must be first premised. It is evident that Nicodemus came to Christ as a Divine teacher, to inquire about the Messiah's kingdom,—that his views respecting it were not only imperfect, but erroneous,—and that our Saviour's object was to give him correct and essential information on the subject, and no more, and through him to inform posterity. If, therefore, this "master in Israel" carried to his associates in the Jewish council a true statement of Christ's instruction, they would obtain what would correct their error, and guide them into spiritual and correct views of his kingdom, without a sentence of unessential matter, at which they might halt, or which might divert their thoughts from the one

thing needful. With these ideas borne in mind, let us view the subject. We shall first give an abstract of this interview.

The *third* verse accurately describes the essential nature of "the kingdom of God," in its spiritual character, unconnected and uncompounded. The *fifth* verse, which mentions "water and Spirit," is descriptive of the same kingdom in its corporate or associated capacity: for entering into which, water in baptism is necessary. "Born of the Spirit" is the same thing with being "born again," or "from above," and "water" is mentioned as being additional and explanatory. The whole subsequent discourse is confirmatory of the necessity of being born of the Spirit, in order to be blessed with salvation. Thus the new-birth, or to be born of the Spirit, resolves itself in this discourse, into *believing* as an act to be exercised by man; and is thus connected with being saved. This view, we conceive, conveys the *literal* and true meaning of this important passage.

Our Saviour seems to answer Nicodemus, either as to his questions or his desires, in the *third* verse,—“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again,” or “from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” It is then added, “Nicodemus saith unto him,—How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” To this Jesus answered,—“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John iii. 3—5. Now let us view these words exactly as they stand, regarding them as having nothing short and nothing over, but allowing all the words their full and proper meaning, without mixing with them any thing which corruption and error may blend with the real subject—“the kingdom of God;” and what shall we find? The two passages are these:—

“Except a man be born again,” or “from above, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God.” Ver. 3.

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God.” Ver 5.

We do not view these two verses as identified in meaning; though we are aware that the Bodleian MS. has the word “enter,” in both verses. But let the words stand as they are in our version. To “see” and to “enter,” are two different things; and each bears here its own appro-

priate meaning, such as is allowed them in other parts of Scripture.* To “see” refers to the capacity of comprehending and enjoying the things of God’s kingdom, which capacity the being “born from above” communicates. To “enter” into the kingdom, we conceive to have a further reference; it relates to the act of becoming its visible members. This is evidently implied in the allusion made to baptised proselytes. They could not become members of the Jewish church without being “born of water.” Nor can any enter into the public body of Christ’s kingdom without being baptised.

The difference of meaning therefore between being “born from above,” and being “born of water and of the Spirit,” is identical with the difference between the mystical body of Christ, including all pious souls from the fall of man to the end of time, and the visible kingdom of God, consisting of the great body of those pious *believers*, united by baptism into a visible society. But it must be carefully remembered, that “visible” here is only added to make the subject more nearly accordant with our usual mode of speaking. There is nothing said in this conversation about visible or mystical. “The kingdom of God,” is the only expression used: and we must keep to our Saviour’s words as they strictly apply to this kingdom; and not extend their meaning further than to his *really spiritual people*, those “born of water and of the Spirit.” The kingdom of God has sometimes a more comprehensive meaning, and embraces good and bad, the wheat and the tares. But *here*, we shall endeavour to shew, it means, and means no more than the true “kingdom of Christ,” his spiritual “kingdom,” which “is not of this world.”

To “see,” to perceive, or comprehend *this* “kingdom of God,” a man must have the nature of God; he must be “born of God”—“born from above”—“born again”—“born of the Spirit.” To “enter” into this kingdom, or which is the same thing, to be an ostensible member of this spiritual society, he must be “born of water and of the Spirit,” that is, he must be born of *water* in addition to his being born of the Spirit. He cannot *enter* into this kingdom but at this door. This is Christ’s appointed medium; it is the visible entrance.

It is necessary to observe further, that this holy,

* See note at the end, p. 34.

heavenly, spiritual kingdom, requires *two* things, the two things above mentioned,—the spiritual birth in order to see, perceive, and enjoy it,—and the “water” in addition, in order to enter into it. The only point of great importance to notice here further, is this,—that it is “generally” but not absolutely and universally “necessary” to *enter* into this kingdom, in order to go to *heaven*, or, in other words, to be made a member of it by baptism, in order to salvation. There have been various instances of persons, who, without being in visible union with this kingdom on earth, have been nevertheless eternally saved. The crucified *thief* was of this number.

There is nothing mysterious or far-fetched in this view, nothing recondite, nothing new. Every one, who knows any thing really and spiritually of religion, knows and acknowledges, that there is a spiritual and select body of people which constitutes the holy temple of God, or “the kingdom of God.” But still many suffer themselves to be led away by another meaning, which “the kingdom of God” sometimes bears in other parts of Scripture, without duly considering the real nature of the *inquiry* here made, and the precise and spiritual character of the *instruction* given, and without being aware, that our Saviour, instead of introducing the most puzzling and perplexing doctrine in all the word of God, has literally and exactly given what the case of the inquirer demanded, and what should, when duly and spiritually apprehended, unfold to all future ages, the *real, holy, and spiritual* nature of “the kingdom of God,” and set forth the *essential character* of its sacred members and their *ostensible bond of union*.

This literal meaning of the words,—“born of water,” and “born of the Spirit,” combined with that of the expression, “enter into,” as being quite distinct from the phrase, “see,” the kingdom of God, will unravel, as we conceive, the perplexity in which this subject has often been involved. The whole error seems to have arisen from making the “kingdom of God,” which cannot be *entered* into without being born of “water and of the Spirit,” synonymous with the kingdom of *heaven*, and from thinking, that as baptism is necessary in order to *enter* into the kingdom of God on earth, it is also necessary in order to enter into heaven. The truth is, these are *two* things. Baptism is not necessary in order that we may

be "born from above," or "born of the Spirit." Our Saviour does *not say* that it is, either here or any where else. But it is necessary in order that we may enter into "the kingdom of God," as constituting Christ's spiritual church on earth, to which belongs the visible initiatory rite of baptism.

The whole difficulty arises from not keeping distinctly in view the *spiritual*, and therefore the mystical character of the "kingdom of God," and from confounding the being "born from above," with being "born of water and of the Spirit." To be born of water is made so far necessary to regeneration and salvation, as that thereby we *enter* into the kingdom of God by public profession, as we have already shewn. It may be said, we know, that this is to make the kingdom of God a visible body, and that as such, we may "see" or comprehend it, without being born again. But here, we conceive, the mistake lies. We can "see" the baptism of water, which is an appendage, an outward circumstance, but not that of the Spirit, which constitutes the real essence and glory of this kingdom. Every member of it is born of water *and* of the Spirit; every member is holy and will go to heaven. *This* kingdom is the really spiritual Israel, not including all the baptised professors, but all that are born of the Spirit as well as of water. This kingdom, though its members are baptised and living in the world, yet the world cannot "see," comprehend, or enjoy it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. *Christ* himself "was in the world," but "the world knew him not." John i. 10. And St. John says the same of his true followers, "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." 1 John iii. 1. His kingdom is "unknown, and yet well known." Of the Comforter it is said, "The world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 17.

This is the true mysterious kingdom, which Nicodemus could not comprehend, hereby affording, in his own person, an example of the truth of our Lord's words, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He, who is wisdom and truth itself, placed here

before his eyes the kingdom of God in its simplest and least compounded form; and yet Nicodemus could not "see" it. This is, indeed, a universal truth; for his kingdom is what no man that is not born from above, can see or comprehend. But when any one is born again, or from above, he can discern it; he can perceive and enjoy its spiritual excellences and blessings; and he may enter into heaven, though he may not, from peculiar circumstances, have been born of water, and so never have entered into the society of Christian worshippers on earth.

Our author indeed admits that our Lord by the words, "born of water and the Spirit," alludes to the notion, that "the Jews regarded the baptised proselyte as a new-born child, and deemed that the passing of a proselyte into the outward covenant, was a new creation,"—and that some of the Jews fancied that the baptised received a "new soul," p. 18. The same view of the subject is given by Archbishop *Lawrence*, and Bishops *Mant* and *Bethell*. We admit that the allusion appears very probable, and it gives a propriety and suitableness to our Saviour's conversation with Nicodemus. The language, however, could in his view have no application to himself, though to *proselytes* he might think it suitable: for these, when baptised, were pretty generally esteemed among the Jews as "new-born, new-created, or as having a new soul." Ideas like these being on his mind, whether expressed or not, and being right to a certain extent, though defective in the main concern, our Saviour allowed what was right, and supplied what was defective. It seems as if he had said, I know you esteem your baptised proselytes as new-born; and they are indeed "born of water:" but what does the "water" intimate? That is not all that is needed to make a true son of Abraham, a spiritual member of the Messiah's kingdom, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," or become a member of that spiritual body, about which it eternally concerns you to inquire.

In this view of this important case, we seem to see both the reason for the language, and the meaning of it. "Born of water," was a part of the creed of Nicodemus, which Christ admits; and he intimates his intention of continuing the use of water as a rite, introductory into his

kingdom. But he assures him, that every true member must be also "born of the Spirit," which is the same thing with being "born again," or "from above." This, however, the Jewish ruler, like every other person not "born of God," could not comprehend. *This*, therefore, was that which *alone* formed the whole of our Lord's instruction in all the subsequent part of his intercourse with Nicodemus. With this he began, on this he mainly enlarged.

There are *two* things which especially justify the foregoing *literal* view of the subject. It appears to suit the case of Nicodemus most exactly,—and, it also suits the universal subject of baptism and regeneration, that is, it accords both *theoretically* and *practically* with every thing that is said in Scripture concerning the *spiritual* "kingdom of God," concerning *regeneration* as a "spiritual principle" of life infused into the soul by the Spirit, from "above,"—and concerning *baptism* as the necessary introduction into the spiritual society of Christ's members on earth. And *thus*, this portion of Scripture, instead of being entirely *above* the meaning of other portions, or not *conformable* to the general character of the New Testament, will be found to present the exact *model*, according to which the *true church* of Christ is every where formed.

FIRST, This view is *theoretically* accordant with every instruction given on the subject in every part of God's word. We shall briefly state the evidence:—

1. It accords with the *context*.

We have already stated, that the meaning of being "born again, or from above," is the same with being "born of the Spirit," and that to be "born of water" has nothing to do with being "born from above;" and that regeneration, as it affects man's experience and enjoyment, resolves itself into the true character of *believing*. Our Lord, having declared the necessity of being born from above, and of being born of water and of the Spirit, immediately proceeds to explain, what the words, "born from above," or of the Spirit meant, leaving wholly, without further notice, as being perfectly understood by Nicodemus, the expression, "born of water," or being baptised. He discards, as nothing to the purpose, the notion of a second natural birth, and shows the necessity of a spiritual birth;—
"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which

is born of the Spirit is Spirit." Each parent, we learn, communicates a nature and produces an offspring like itself. Then he says, what clearly proves that to be "born again," or from "above," and to be "born of the Spirit," is the same thing; for after having said, "that what is born of the Spirit is Spirit," he adds, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be *born again*," clearly implying, that when he explained what it was to be born of the Spirit, he also explained what it was to be born again, or from above. He presents still the same view of the mystical nature of the spiritual birth, when he alludes to the invisible operation, but sensible effects of the wind:—"So is every one that is born of the Spirit." This spiritual birth was the stumbling-block to this master in Israel: and he still enquires, as every one not born of the Spirit may enquire, "How can these things be?"

Our Saviour now changes the character of his language; he drops the metaphor of *new-birth*, but still teaches the same thing in a different mode of expression. Instead of speaking of being born again, or of regeneration, he henceforth speaks of *believing*. And as he before ascribed man's ignorance of "the kingdom of God" to his being void of a spiritual nature, so now he ascribes the same to unbelief. Our Lord assures Nicodemus, that they (himself and his disciples) "spoke what they knew, and testified what they had seen:" but he adds, "Ye (Pharisees) receive not our witness," or, as he tells him afterwards, "ye *believe* not." John iii. 11, 12. Hence it evidently appears, that the *unregenerate* heart is an "evil heart of *unbelief*."

From the character and *members* of this kingdom, our Saviour ascends to its King, even to the throne of God himself; and resolves the whole into the unspeakable *love* of the Father, in the gift of his only-begotten Son. He intimates the nature of the Messiah's death, as an atoning sacrifice, by alluding to the brazen serpent, a type of his crucifixion, and of the healing efficacy of his atonement. Then he expressly states, that God's only-begotten Son was sent into the world to save the world; and he also declares plainly and expressly, the *condition* on which alone salvation would be bestowed—"Whosoever believeth in him," we are told, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life." In the 18th verse, our Lord seems anxious

to make Nicodemus and every one else understand the perfect harmony there is between "*being born again*," and *believing*:—"He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." The same truth is evident, from a part of our Saviour's commission to his apostles;—"He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." "*Saved*," yet there is not a word here about regeneration, or being born again, or born of the Spirit. But no man can be saved without being born again. To be born again then, must certainly be involved or included in believing; for the true believer is one born of God, as St. John expressly declares,—"*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.*" And again, he identifies the two in another way, by implying that every one that is born of God is a believer:—"Whatsoever," or rather, "whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory (the victorious grace or power) that overcometh the world, even our *faith*." 1 John v. 5. If believing were not essentially the same with the new-birth, they could not both be equally necessary to salvation, as they expressly are in this conversation. It could not be true, that to be born again is indispensably necessary, in order to be saved, unless that birth were at least involved in believing. The remaining instruction, given from the 18th to the 21st verse, shows us that there is the same defect in moral character and spiritual perception, belonging to the *unbelieving* as to the unregenerate or to him that is not *born again*, and that in each case alike, it is the blindness of the "natural man," and the loving of "darkness rather than light," that conceals from the mind the glory, excellency, and infinite desirableness of "the kingdom of God."

Thus we see that the whole of our Saviour's discourse with Nicodemus, is replete with the essentials of the kingdom of God, that every part is illustrative of every other, and that the whole, taken together, is an almost perfect syllabus of the Gospel of Christ. How then can we account for that obliquity which persists in rending half a dozen words ("born of water and the Spirit") from their close connexion with the whole context, and compelling them to speak a language contradicted by the rest

of the whole discourse? How, otherwise, but on the principle stated in this discourse,—“They will not come to the light;” and therefore, they “cannot see the kingdom of God.” For the sake of perspicuity we shall here briefly repeat what the exposition we have given imports:—

1. That being born from above is the same with being born of the Spirit, and that the spiritual nature communicated in the new-birth is a *holy nature*, which turns from sin and cleaves to Christ, and therefore constitutes that state of mind in which faith exists, so that it may be identified with *believing*, or in other words, with “repentance and faith;”—

2. That this holy and spiritual nature is necessary in order to “see” or perceive, comprehend, and spiritually enjoy “the kingdom of God,” and that this birth is our meetness for heaven, and brings with it a real title to heaven, even before we are baptised;—

3. That nevertheless Christ must have his kingdom a visible body by the rite of baptism, as well as by the renewal of his Spirit. None, therefore, can *enter* into the genuine “kingdom of God” on earth, or become an ostensible member of it, who is not “born of water, and of the Spirit;”—

4. That *baptism* does not “convey” the new-birth or spiritual regeneration, but follows after it, in order to form or incorporate those who are born again, “into one body in Christ.” We shall now proceed to our next position, which is,—

2. This view accords with the *general theory of Divine truth*.

By attentively examining Scripture, we shall find, that sacraments are not appointed to *communicate* the *first* “spiritual grace” to the soul, or to form the *primary* believing character. Baptism is intended to unite, combine, and exhibit these holy characters when formed, so that they may become a holy kingdom to the Lord. To speak, therefore, of the first holy nature, or original, spiritual and Divine disposition, as “conveyed” by baptism, is contrary to *type*, *fulfilment*, and common sense. Every stone in the typical temple of Solomon was squared and fashioned for its place, before it was incorporated into the building. And to suppose that unregenerate souls are first made spiritual and holy by being baptised into one body by water,

is quite as strange and absurd, as to suppose that rough, unshapen stones, taken out of the quarry, would become square and smooth by the very act of putting them in the building. Spiritual persons, forming, “God’s building,” are made first “lively stones” by the new-birth; then they are, as it were, united together by baptism, and incorporated into one society, and thus become “a holy temple in the Lord.”

This seems to be the genuine notion of St. Peter and St. Paul. The very act of building does not *form* the stones. Nor does the act of placing persons in one company, form or make the individual character. The “new-birth” forms the mind; and the new birth *and* baptism form the building. “In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord” —*groweth* by a Divine increase of spiritual affection, and by the addition of spiritual members. “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. ii. 21, 22. Builded *together*—through the *Spirit*,—these expressions seem to convey the exact idea of our Saviour’s words—“born of water and of the Spirit.” They had received a new nature by the baptism of the Spirit, and *entered* into the kingdom of God by being “born of water,” and thus became united “together” as the heart of one man.

We have already stated, that to be “*born again*” is, in a spiritual sense, the same as to believe, both having the same blessing attached to them, that is, salvation. The correctness of this position, and its agreement with the *general theory of Divine truth*, may be easily proved. Those only become the sons of God, who believe on “Christ’s name; who are born—of God.” John i. 12, 13. Those who believe, and those who are born of God, are represented in this passage to be the same. And St. John, in his First Epistle, writes—“Whosoever *believeth* that Jesus is the Christ, is *born of God*.” John v. 1. But this disposition of mind is not only separable from baptism, but it is *necessary*, according to the Divine economy of man’s salvation, that it should *precede* it. Unbelievers, that is, the unregenerate, are not at liberty to receive baptism. They are wholly unfit for it. For into what are they to be baptised? Not into Christ’s name, in

whom they do not believe. Such a strange idea cannot be entertained.

What we have stated is the genuine THEORY of Christ's *commission* to his disciples, that is, faith, which is involved in the new-birth,—baptism,—and salvation. But no baptism is prescribed or allowed, unless faith go before. "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved." "What doth hinder me to be baptised?" Nothing but unbelief. "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest:" but certainly, thou *mayest not*, otherwise. The very character of baptism, and its design as a token of friendship between Christ and his church, and as representing the spiritual character of its members, and the new-birth unto righteousness, professed and promised by those who wish to be baptised,—both its character and design necessarily imply, that the hearts of those who are candidates for it are divorced from every other Lord, and that they embrace Christ to the saving of their souls. Every thing short of this is an abomination with the Lord. Baptism is that which *represents* the true spiritual character of the kingdom of God, both with respect to God, and also its members. But we have spoken of this, and shall speak more of it in a future number.

SECONDLY. Our view corresponds with the *practical operation of the Gospel* in forming the "kingdom of God."

There has been universally the profession or the appearance of a new heart and character, or of faith and repentance, or of the new-birth unto righteousness, *before* any were wished or invited to *enter* into the kingdom of God. The Ethiopian eunuch, to whom we have already alluded, was an instance of this: "If thou *believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest" be baptised. What was Peter's exhortation to those who enquired, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It was first to repent, and then to be baptised:—"Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And it is added, "With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." The effect corresponded with this exhortation: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptised ;

and the same day were added unto them about three thousand souls." Acts ii. 38. 41. There was here a clear manifestation made of the properties of the new birth, *before* they were added to the disciples, or, in other words, *before* they *entered* by baptism into the kingdom of God. What but the Holy Ghost produced that effect, which is expressed by their being "pricked in their hearts?" What made them so anxious to flee from the wrath to come, but the illumination and influence of the Holy Spirit? By whose influence was it, that they "gladly received" the word of God? "The natural man," we are assured, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." And yet these people did receive them gladly. They must, therefore, have been born from above; and hence the effects that have been mentioned. We are also told, that the numbers which the Lord added to the church daily, were "such as should be *saved*." These, then, were clearly born first from above, and then *added* to the holy number, by being publicly baptised.

There is the strongest proof of what we advocate in the case of *Cornelius*. He most clearly possessed a new and spiritual disposition; for he was a "devout" man, and "feared God." And Peter said, with an especial reference to him, that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is *accepted* with him." And as an evidence of his being in an accepted state as to his personal piety, though he stood in need of more teaching as to the *way* of salvation, he (and his household too) received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, even *before* he was baptised. And it was this that overcame the reluctance of Peter to admit him, by baptism, into the kingdom of God, or into the number of its visible members. We are informed, in Acts v. 14, that there "were more added unto the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." But of what character, and of what disposition were they? How did they stand as to their judgment and affections towards the Saviour? It is simply said, that "*believers* were added unto the Lord." Yea, they were *believers*, that is, such as were regenerate, and penitent, having been converted from "the error of their ways" by the word and Spirit of God: and having experienced this holy change, they necessarily desired to change their companions, and to be added in a public manner, by bap-

tism, unto a new society, "the people of God." In other words, they were "born of water and of the Spirit," and thus became the real members of "the kingdom of God:" and all real members of this kingdom are "*such as shall be saved.*"

Another striking instance we find in St. Paul. He was convicted and converted on his way to Damascus. He became penitent, believing, and obedient; he was full of prayer, and was a chosen vessel unto God, and all this, *before* Ananias invited him to "arise, and wash away his sins," symbolically, by being "baptised."—*Lydia* was another remarkable instance. It is said that the Lord "*opened* her heart, so that she attended to the things spoken of Paul:" and in consequence of this holy change, she was added, by baptism, to the number of God's people. There is not, indeed, in all the records given in the New Testament, of the practical working of the Gospel, a single instance to be found of any person being encouraged to be baptised, without a testimony given, by profession or spiritual example, that the heart was "on the Lord's side." But no one's heart has ever yet been turned to Christ, except by the Spirit of "the Father who sent Him."

We shall now proceed to show that no *other* interpretation will accord either with itself, with the context, or with the Scripture at large.

The Professor claims the assistance of the fathers, and makes the subject quite different from what it really is. He considers the new-birth, which Christ bestows, to be "bestowed through baptism." He strenuously holds, that "our blessed Saviour's words declare the absolute necessity of regeneration for the entrance into the kingdom of heaven, or our state of grace and glory;" and that this regeneration is the being born of "water and the Spirit,"—p. 19. He maintains, that there is no information in Scripture that "regeneration can be obtained in any way but by baptism,"—p. 14. He says, in baptism itself two very different causes are combined—the "baptism of water and of the Spirit, and that only,"—p. 13. We find him also saying, that "we are not said to be regenerated by faith, or love, or prayer, or any other grace which God

worketh in us, but to be born of water and of the Spirit," —p. 12.

Hooker is also quoted, who, as we are told, "well says — 'I hold it for a most infallible rule, in expositions of Sacred Scriptures, that where a literal construction will stand, the further from the letter is generally the worst,'" and this rule, we are further told, he applies with especial force "concerning regeneration by water and the Holy Ghost." —p. 16.

The careful reader will notice here—

1. That Christ "bestows our new birth or regeneration *through baptism*," and not *without* it.

2. That this "regeneration is *absolutely necessary* for the entrance into the kingdom of *grace and glory*."

3. That this is "the *literal interpretation*" of the words "*born of water and of the Spirit*."

Now we have already, as we think, given the *literal* interpretation of our Saviour's words. But we have found nothing like the above. The words are, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What is now their "literal" interpretation? What the words say is, that a man must "be born of water and of the Spirit," in order to "enter into the kingdom of God." This we perfectly allow. But they say no more. They say nothing whatever about receiving Spiritual regeneration by "water," and nothing whatever about the kingdom of "glory." There are here *two* errors, the foundation of all the rest; for our Saviour's words, "literally" understood, teach no such things as are stated above.

1. Baptism, as we have already shown, does not *convey* regeneration, nor is it instituted or intended for such a purpose.

It might as well be contended, that baptism conveys *faith*, and through faith salvation; for salvation is evermore joined with true faith. Our Lord's words expressly, repeatedly, and most emphatically declare, that "whoever *believeth in Him* shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Yet these words belong to the same discourse, and are, in a particular manner, explanatory of what he before said about the new birth, and may be viewed as equal to saying, the new birth is the same as believing, or, it is that which issues in believing. No ingenuity on earth can *separate* faith and regeneration: for they are both

expressly united with salvation, and absolutely necessary for its attainment.

2. *Baptismal regeneration* is said to be “necessary to enter into the kingdom of *grace and glory*.”

Part of this error is obviated under the last remark. Baptism, we have allowed, is necessary as well as the Spirit, in order “to enter into the kingdom of *God*.” But there is here a little too much haste. We have observed before, that the “kingdom of God” is not in every sense the same with glory, or with heaven. It is identified with heaven, we admit, as far as it extends, inasmuch as every true member of the Church of Christ is born of water and of the Spirit, and, consequently, will be everlastingly saved. But we do not consider that *eternal glory* is exactly identified, as to the *number* of its inhabitants, with the Church of Christ, or the “kingdom of *God*,” into which “water” is necessary to enter. The mystical body of Christ is, we conceive, co-extensive with salvation, or with the number of the saved; and regeneration is co-extensive with that mystical body. But we do not think that there ever was a time, since “men began to multiply on the earth,” and external signs, as well as internal grace, marked the boundaries of the kingdom of God, that that kingdom embraced every individual pious soul that was an heir of immortal “glory.” We hear of men, before the Flood, who “called on the name of the Lord,” but we do not hear of any external distinguishing marks encircling that society before *Abraham*, who was called from among his people, and who, with his posterity, was afterwards distinguished by the rite of *circumcision*. But there are here *two* remarks, which are of universal application:—*first*, that *Abraham* was a pious regenerate soul *before* he received “the sign of *circumcision*, a seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had, being yet uncircumcised;” and, *secondly*, that the same faith was required of, and *professed* by every person received into that covenant, *before* he received the sign of *circumcision*.

Hence, then, our Saviour’s instruction, which is exceedingly appropriate to the kingdom of God under the *new* dispensation, was yet equally appropriate, *mutatis mutandis*, to the kingdom of God under the old. No man could enter the “kingdom of God” *then*, any more than *now*, without being born, if we may so speak, of

circumcision (otherwise of water), and of the Spirit. If Nicodemus, therefore, had not lost and mistaken, like all other unregenerate persons, the spiritualities of his *own* religion, he would not have mistaken those of Christ's religion. Though it be true, that after the appointment of circumcision, "the kingdom of God" became appropriate, and was distinguished by that rite, yet it is obvious that it did not include every soul who "feared God and worked righteousness." *Melchisedec*, and *Job* with his *friends*, in its early days, and the *Eunuch*, the *Centurion*, as well as *Cornelius* and his *friends*, in later times, are examples confirmatory of this exception. And forasmuch as every person is *required*, whether under the old or new dispensation, *to be* a sincere and spiritual *convert* to the "faith of God's elect," *before* he be admitted by the initiatory sacrament among the spiritual "children of God," it is worse than waste of words to contend, that all such are "unregenerate" until they are "baptised." For if they are sincere believers, they would be saved, if they could not be baptised—so that it is like tying the *term* regeneration, to a nonentity, to assert that such "holy" souls are unregenerate, though they obtain salvation with eternal "glory."

We are perfectly aware, that in our interpretation of John iii. 5, we have violated the *canon* of exposition laid down by, we believe, the united fiat of Archbishop Lawrence, Bishop Bethell, Bishop Mant, and Dr. Pusey, upon *this text*. The latter writer, indeed, considers this canon as little less than infallible. He first *assumes the fact*, that "the whole church of God, from India to Britain, as expressing itself by the fathers or its liturgies, for fifteen centuries, took in one sense the words of our Redeemer, 'except a man be born again of water and the Spirit.'" Then, *secondly*, on this assumption he builds the following "argument" (which he tells us is "briefly" this); "He (Christ), by his divine foreknowledge, must have known this, that his whole church would so understand his words, and in his goodness he could not mislead her." He must then have meant to teach as he allowed her to understand him. The force of this argument is not weakened by the fact, that the modern church of Rome, or other heretics, allege Scripture in support of their errors.

“This argument,” he adds, “weighed strongly in my own mind, so that I should have needed no other; and—I felt and said, that ‘with one who loved his Saviour, I should be content to rest the question upon this one passage.’” Pref. vii.

All this may be very plausible, but we do not think it sound reasoning. We have in the preceding Tract alluded to the difficulty and danger of making such an appeal to the fathers in *this case*, and when we again resort to the special, though brief, consideration of *this point*, we shall probably find as little reason to place confidence in the Professor’s appeal to the Fathers, as we have found in his appeal to the “*Institution of Baptism*,” and his “*Interpretation*” of St. John, iii. 5.

We assure Dr. Pusey, that though we most willingly sit at our “Saviour’s feet,” “teachably” to hear “his words” (apart from “modern systems”) and deeply anxious to learn what they “must mean in his mouth who spoke them,” and would desire, above all things, to have our judgments brought under the “subduing influence of God’s word;” and admitting the importance of our author’s remark, that, “a spiritual mind will see truth for itself,” we must beg to decline conforming to the rule of interpretation which he has prescribed. And while we do this, we must deny that we “explain away the force of our Saviour’s words,” or give an “explanation of those words” “inconsistent with reverence for him.” (iii. vi.) We certainly have not, however, the same respect for Dr. Pusey’s traditionary “Exposition.” But on this occasion, our reasons for non-conformity must be very brief, as the subject is interminable.

1. This canon, as Dr. Pusey uses it, would go far to enervate and make void great portions of holy Scripture, and well nigh overturn the sixth article of our church.

2. The notion that the “Divine foreknowledge must have known”—and the Divine “goodness could not mislead” the faith of the church, must lead either to infallibility, or to a worse consequence; namely, that of charging all the errors into which the church may have fallen, upon the circumstance of her being *misled* by her Lord and Saviour! Thus making our Saviour the source of error as well as of truth.

3. *As a rule*, universal belief can never be enforced as a duty on mankind. For the fountain of our faith is, and ought to be, accessible to all, and intelligible to all. But what the church has in all places, by all her members and at all times believed, is one of the most difficult points of knowledge to be ascertained: and ultimately it would merge in the claims of infallibility. What the Scripture tells of the “unity of the Spirit” and the unity of faith, *all* may know, and they can *all* know no more. This informs us that there is “one body and one spirit (as St. Paul writes), even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” And what can they, or what need they know besides? It is most lamentable to think of enlightening the sun by factitious luminaries, all of which profess to receive their tiny lights only from his beams.

4. Again. Should not a canon, so sacred and so commanding, be, as its definition (“Semper, ubique, et ab omnibus”) demands, invariable as to persons, times, and places? If it exists now, it is not *true* (“ab omnibus”), for hundreds of thousands, Dr. Pusey being witness, have deviated from this rule for three hundred years. If it has ceased, it is false as to *time*; it is not “semper.”

5. Once more. If the “*whole church*” of Christ be guided by “his goodness and foreknowledge,” how are we to account for such a numerous body of “his church” being now led to adopt another interpretation of “his words?” Does “his goodness” now, not before, “mislead” them? Or, are they to be *excluded* from the number of those who are real members of Christ’s church, and committed to the “uncovenanted mercies of God?”

6. It is worth while to inquire when this assumed new interpretation started, and what was the state and character of the church of Christ before and since this awful error took place? Dr. Pusey informs us, that this departure was effected at the *Reformation*: all before were of one creed. Then, if all held this one creed, it was the creed of *Popery*, and as that has not reformed, it is so still. What, however, is the *character* of those, who, in this respect, as well as others, have *reformed* their creed? The Professor admits that “they love their Saviour.” (vi.) Does the Romish church, which still retains the *opus ope-*

ratum, "love the Saviour?" And does she love *one* mediator or many? But in reference to—

THE FATHERS, whose piety we highly venerate. In what respect is this "*one sense*" of Christ's words, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," true, in *fact*, as applied to them? We know that Hooker is often quoted as saying, that every one of the fathers understood this text "*literally*." But what does Hooker mean by the fathers understanding it *literally*? Why, they understood that "water" meant water, and not something else; that is, the fathers believed that "water" was intended to allude to baptism by water "*literally*," and not *figuratively*, like baptism by "fire." *This* is what was understood by *literally*. But now we must remind Dr. Pusey and the reader, that in *this sense* we also receive our "Lord's words" "*literally*." We believe, with all the fathers, that "water," and that baptism, were "*literally*," not "*figuratively*," intended by our Saviour.

But further. *We* believe and interpret the whole of our Lord's words, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," *literally*. We hold this language to be *literally* and invariably true without exception. But none of the Fathers uniformly did this. Nor do either Archbishop Lawrence, or Bishops Bethell and Mant, nor even, we believe, Dr. Pusey himself, interpret and hold our "Redeemer's words" *literally* and without exception. They all depart from their own rule of "*literal interpretation*," but we *never* depart from the most exactly literal interpretation, and never wish or need to do it.

We find, therefore, that the *fathers*, and every one else, who embraces the notion about "water and the Spirit," being "*absolutely necessary*," to "*grace and glory*," are not only obliged to contradict the most obvious facts—the scripture, and common sense; but they are also compelled to subvert their *own* professedly "*literal interpretation*," and, in Hooker's language, acknowledge that it will *not* "*stand*,"—that it is inconsistent with itself, and with other branches of their creed. They are, therefore, forced to make various exceptions to this "*absolute necessity of baptism*," as to regeneration and consequent salvation. The fathers excepted *martyrs*, or such as were baptised in "their own blood;" thus turning blood into "water," in a case of necessity. They also

excepted sincere converts who "*desired*" baptism, but died unbaptised. And who, we would ask, under the influence of that instruction, which suspends "*salvation*," on the reception of baptism, would not "*desire*" baptism, though at his last gasp, that after a life not always well spent, he might receive this "*viaticum*," as it was called, and ascend to heaven?

Thus we see how utterly impossible it is to force any sense on our "Saviour's words," but that which their genuine formation appropriately bears. He says, that to be "*born of water and of the Spirit*," is necessary to enter into the kingdom of God. But though all who do thus enter, are "*such as shall be saved*;" yet he does not say, that there is no other possible way to go to heaven. The expiring *Thief* was a notable exception. Besides, the notion involves endless absurdities. Baptism never received an appointment to *convey* regeneration. Regeneration is always connected with believing; and believing is always required *before* baptism. And it would require a miracle to enable all men, every where, and at all times, to ensure baptism, after believing, and before death, when sometimes their declared belief was the signal for their immediate execution.

"The kingdom of God," as here defined by our Lord himself, consisting *only* of such as are "*born of water and of the Spirit*," being firmly and distinctly kept in view, will enable us to understand with greater readiness, the true character, design, and office, of that initiatory rite, which is by our Lord made necessary to a due entry into it. This will be the subject of our next inquiry.

But in concluding our remarks on our Lord's interview with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a master in Israel; we cannot but observe with what Divine wisdom the whole intercourse was conducted. This learned enquirer was minutely acquainted, as all the Pharisees were, with every custom, rite, and ceremony, in use among the Jews. Our Saviour's allusion, therefore, to "*water*," must have been perfectly comprehended by him. But *he* (as well as all his brethren) had quite lost the "*spirit*" of his own religion, and rested entirely on "*the water*." Christ allowed the "*water*," and said no more about it, but dwelt wholly on the "*Spirit*," and the spiritual nature of "*the kingdom of God*." *This* was the only thing with which Nicodemus was unacquainted, and which only, our

Lord on that account, explained. If our Saviour, instead of drawing the mind of Nicodemus to that alone which is *essential* to the kingdom of God, had introduced other considerations, explanatory of what is external and internal, of professing members, and real members, of “wheat and tares,” would not this have tended to perplex the erroneous understanding of Nicodemus, and to occupy his mind with less important considerations; and might it not even have furnished this technical casuist with pretences for considering himself capable of entering into the kingdom of God, defective as he was of that Spirit which is essential to its true character, and essential to everlasting life? And is it not obvious, that should Nicodemus become, from what our Lord had said, spiritually and experimentally acquainted with the kingdom of God, in its simple and unmixed character, he would soon learn to distinguish things that differ? And when he should learn, that in other parts of our Lord’s teaching, the meaning of the kingdom of God was *more extensive*, and comprehended many that were “not of” the “kingdom,” he would never again stumble, as now he did, at not being able to distinguish *the real* kingdom of God, from a mere *external* body of professors, called by that name.

In page 15 we observed, that the words to “*see*” and to “*enter*,” bear in other parts of scripture, the appropriate meaning which we have there given them. The reader may be glad to have some further evidence of this assertion. We therefore remark:—

1. That all words adapted to the *sight* and *action* of our natural members, have and must have, a figurative or spiritual meaning when they are used to convey mental or spiritual ideas.

2. The word here translated to “*see*,” is not uncommonly used in Scripture to signify mental discernment or perception—the meaning which we have in John iii. 3, given to it. Let the reader examine only the following verses where the *same word* (or one from the same root) is used in the original. Matt. xiii. 14; Luke ii. 26; John i. 48; Acts ii. 27; xv. 6; Heb. xi. 13. In which passages it is said, “that he should not *see* death”—“should not *see* corruption”—and “when thou wast under the fig-tree I *saw* thee”—“Abraham *saw* my day”—“these all died in the faith, not having received

the promises, but having *seen* them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The above instances are plain, intelligible, and convincing. But the same word in four or five different places, where the prophet Isaiah, (vi. 9,) is quoted, is put in *opposition* to *seeing* with the bodily eyes, and must therefore relate to the mental perception only; as in Matt. xiii. 14; Mark iv. 12; Luke viii. 10; John xii. 40; and Acts xxviii. 26. The translation is, "by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not *perceive*." In all these cases the *seeing* is taken from *another* word, while the *same* word that is (in John xxxiii.) rendered to *see*, is in all the foregoing references rendered to *perceive*. And this, moreover, where *spiritual perception* alone is the very thing of which the Jews were defective. "Seeing ye shall see, but not *perceive*." That is, seeing with your eyes ye shall not *see* with your minds. The precise reference in every one of those cases is to the true *spiritual* nature of *Christ's kingdom*, and the direct and exact idea of John iii. 3,—“Ye cannot *see* the kingdom of God.”

3. The word “*see*” must necessarily have a figurative and not a literal meaning, otherwise it could not be strictly true. For if a person must be born again in order to *see* with the bodily eyes the kingdom of God; or, as Dr. Pusey calls it, “*grace and glory* :” no *blind* person could possibly be saved, because he could not in this sense see the kingdom of God : and a Pharisee who says he *sees*, might go to heaven though *blind* to all the spiritual excellences of it, and full of malignant hatred against the Messiah and his kingdom.

4. Dr. Pusey and every one else here uses the words to “*see*” and to “*enter*” in a figurative, and not in a correctly literal sense. When he speaks of “the kingdom of God,” as being explained by a state of “*grace and glory*,” he certainly means more than *seeing* with the eyes the kingdom of God, or walking on our legs into the gospel church; and thence to glory.

5. The interpretation then which we have given, seems the most exact meaning which the words in their situation can possibly bear. We have added the above remarks that the reader may distinctly perceive that our views on these two texts, upon which so much depends, cannot be shaken by any verbal criticism.

